



The CATALYST Consortium is a global reproductive health and family planning activity initiated in September 2000 by the Office of Population and Reproductive Health, Bureau for Global Health of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The Consortium is a partnership of five organizations: Academy for Educational Development (AED), Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA), Meridian Group International, Inc., Pathfinder International and PROFAMILIA/Colombia. CATALYST works in reproductive health and family planning through synergistic partnerships and state-of-the-art technical leadership. Its overall strategic objective is to increase the use of sustainable, quality reproductive health and family planning services and healthy practices through clinical and nonclinical programs.

## **Mission**

CATALYST's mission is to improve the quality and availability of sustainable reproductive health and family planning services.

For detailed information on each individual strategy including its results, challenges and lessons learned, please refer to the following best practices:

1. Engaging Community Leaders to Create a Movement for Change
2. Engaging the Media
3. Mobilizing Agriculture and Irrigation Extension Workers
4. Mobilizing Community Outreach workers
5. Mobilizing Religious leaders
6. Reaching Women and Men Through Literacy Classes
7. University Peer educators

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# **Best Practices in Egypt: Involving Men in Reproductive Health and Family Planning Programs The Minia Experience**

## **Executive Summary**

Programs worldwide recognize the importance of involving men in reproductive health and family planning (RH/FP). Partnering with men in RH/FP is a gender-sensitive programmatic approach to improve RH/FP outcomes and is based on the Cairo principles of RH/FP,<sup>1</sup> gender equality and women's empowerment. Male involvement aims to increase men's comfort with seeing themselves as responsible and caring partners in RH/FP, acknowledges the existing differential power relations between men and women, and benefits the society, community, couples, women, men, youth, and children. This recognition arises from the observations of RH/FP care providers worldwide that men often act as the gatekeepers to women's health care.

TAHSEEN/CATALYST's<sup>2</sup> strategies of men's involvement is built on Egypt's National Population Policy<sup>3</sup> and the Cairo principles of RH, and strives to: (1) increase men's access to information about RH/FP practices; (2) emphasize the importance of men's roles as supporters of and contributors to their families' RH/FP needs; and (3) offer accurate knowledge of RH/FP to dispel prominent misconceptions that prevent men and their partners from using RH/FP services. For these reasons, TAHSEEN initiated seven men's involvement strategies in rural Minia of Upper Egypt, which were ultimately scaled-up to Beni Suef and Fayoum.

Given that farming is central to the economy in Minia and a large portion of the population is illiterate, TAHSEEN chose to reach male members of the community through various nonhealth sectors such as agriculture and education. TAHSEEN worked with agriculture/irrigation extension workers, literacy facilitators, community outreach workers (*Mothakef El Sakkany*), and university peer educators, while the media and natural community leaders supported and reinforced the TAHSEEN messages. The project linked with the religious sector because religion plays a strong role in Egyptian life, and religious leaders reach a large proportion of the population through their weekly sermons.

Once the link was made with these groups, TAHSEEN provided structured trainings to agriculture/irrigation extension workers, literacy facilitators, peer educators, and religious leaders, focusing not only on the medical aspect of RH/FP, but also on the important role that men play in RH/FP decision making. Even though trainings were tailored for the respective audiences, the messages, such as men's shared role in planning their family, were consistent across the various group trainings.

After the trainings, these groups communicated the new information in different settings such as RH/FP awareness-raising sessions in the community, literacy classes, media coverage, etc. Through this active participation, these men became "champions" of men's involvement and supporters of RH/FP.

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<sup>1</sup> This refers to the guidelines established at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), Cairo, Egypt.

<sup>2</sup> TAHSEEN/CATALYST will be referred to as TAHSEEN throughout the document

<sup>3</sup> Men's involvement is addressed in the Egyptian National Population Policy (2000-2017) in the following two objectives: (1) increase male awareness of their roles and responsibilities towards parenting, FP and RH, and (2) supports men's active and positive involvement in achieving good reproductive health and family planning.

